

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #7481/01 2921415
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191415Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9598
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 9436
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 8981
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5529
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6167
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4124

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007481

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2017
TAGS: [ECON](#) [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [VZ](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S OCTOBER 11 MEETING WITH
VICE-PRESIDENT SANTOS

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In an October 11 meeting, the Ambassador and Vice-President Santos reviewed prospects for U.S. approval of the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), agreed on the need to work closely to deflect efforts by President Chavez and the FARC to make the USG and GOC look intransigent in humanitarian accord talks, and discussed possible U.S. assistance to GOC development projects for the Wayuu indigenous people in La Guajira department. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) The Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Vice-President Francisco Santos on October 11. Santos was accompanied by his Chief of Staff Maria Angela Holguin. USAID Director and PolCouns (notetaker) accompanied the Ambassador.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

¶3. (C) Santos said U.S. Congressional approval of the FTA is in doubt. The GOC is working with other Latin American presidents to encourage them to send a letter to U.S. Congressional Leaders highlighting the importance of approving the Peruvian, Panamanian and Colombian FTAs as a package. Santos welcomed suggestions to help the GOC overcome opposition by human rights groups to FTA passage, noting that the GOC will substantially increase the Prosecutor General's (Fiscalia) budget in 2008. This will improve the Fiscalia's capacity to implement the Justice and Peace Law and to prosecute human rights abuses. He said the GOC is also considering setting up a new Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that would coordinate all human rights activities.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador applauded these initiatives, and suggested the GOC reconsider proposals to introduce legislation that would reduce the jail time served by politicians convicted of paramilitary ties. Santos said recent revelations of intercepts showing some para-politicians conspiring to obstruct justice had deflated the movement in the Colombian Congress to help their jailed colleagues. He assured the Ambassador that GOC legislation clarifying the status of demobilized paramilitary foot soldiers would not benefit legislators or other public officials.

PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND HUMANITARIAN ACCORD

¶5. (C) Holguin asked for the USG's assessment of Chavez' role in humanitarian accord negotiations with the FARC. The Ambassador said the USG welcomes any initiative aimed at obtaining the release of all of the hostages held by the FARC, including the three U.S. citizens, but noted our skepticism regarding Chavez' intentions. He said the GOC and the international community need to put the focus on the FARC's failure to offer something concrete, such as proof of life, in the process. To date, the FARC has enjoyed a free ride. The Ambassador said the GOC and USG will need to work together to avoid Chavez' inevitable efforts to make us take the blame for the processes, eventual failure.

¶6. (C) Santos said there is a minimal chance Chavez' initiative will lead to the hostages' freedom, but he did not rule out the FARC's eventual release of Clara Rojas and her small child. He complained that Chavez and the FARC are winning the public relations battle so far, and agreed the GOC needs to shift the spotlight to the FARC's failure to produce proof of life or to meet with Chavez in Caracas. He committed to work closely with the Ambassador on this issue.

CHANGING FARC TACTICS

¶7. (C) Santos warned that the FARC are shifting resources from rural to urban areas. The FARC recognize the future lies in the cities, and are recruiting university students and middle-class youth to conduct terrorist actions and political indoctrination. A university student placed the last FARC bomb in Bogota. The current high level of

political polarization facilitates FARC targeting of middle-class students. Santos urged that USG security assistance address this new FARC threat.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS IN LA GUAJIRA

¶8. (C) Holguin reviewed GOC programs to provide the Wayuu indigenous people in La Guajira department with greater access to energy, schools and water. The current effort receives funding from the Spanish aid agency and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF). The GOC would welcome U.S. support as well. Santos noted that since the Wayuu live in both Colombia and Venezuela, the projects feature Venezuelan local and regional government participation. The Ambassador said we would be happy to explore ways to support these projects. USAID director Ayalde noted several programs that could be used to assist in the educational area.

Brownfield